

NIGHT OUT



Sweet harmony: Blind Boys come to D.C.

By Emily Cary
Special to The Examiner

The Washington Performing Arts Society invites you to head “Down By the Riverside” and experience the musical partnership of the Blind Boys of Alabama and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. Together, they represent 115 years of incomparable music making in a program blending traditional gospel and New Orleans jazz.

Since their founding in 1939 at Alabama’s Talladega Institute for the Blind, the Blind Boys of Alabama have earned five Grammy Awards and five Lifetime Achievement Awards. They were inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2007. Since their debut concerts before small, segregated audiences, they have spread their beautiful voices around the world many times and rejoin the Preservation Hall Jazz Band at the Warner Theatre direct from a tour of China.

Lead singer Jimmy Carter has been with the ensemble since the beginning. Speaking from Minneapolis near the close of its annual Christmas tour, he cited the group’s fondness for New Orleans as ample reason for joining PHJB and other distinguished local musicians to record their 2009 Grammy Award winner “Down in New Orleans.”

“All our members grew up singing and harmonizing in the church. We’re a family and, as gospel singers, our goal is to win people over. We’ve performed often in New Orleans, and although we can’t help build houses for the people who still need them, we can bring everyone hope and encouragement. We enjoy touring with the PHJB because they are very nice gentlemen.”

Carter is grateful for the opportunity to share his music with the world and the many thrills he and the ensemble have had over the years, performing at the White House among them. The group has been featured on many

IF YOU GO

Blind Boys of Alabama and Preservation Hall Jazz Band

» Where: Warner Theatre

» When: 8 p.m. Friday

» Info: \$28 to \$58; 202-785-9727; wpas.org

is still performed every night in Preservation Hall, where portraits of present and past musicians line the walls.

“I grew up in the French Quarter and lived with its music all my life,” he said. “Hurricane Katrina was the turning point in a lot of our lives. ... The storm had a great impact on the community and our family, and we’ve spent the last four years fixing up Preservation Hall. ... The city got through its darkest period because of the music.”

When the Blind Boys of Alabama visited New Orleans to make the record “Down By the Riverside” as a means of earning money for restoration of the city, Jaffe saw the remarkable effect they had on the citizens and how well their two groups meshed.

“The BBA and the PHJB are cultural institutions,” he said. “We got the idea to take them both on the road throughout America so audiences who can’t get to New Orleans can enjoy these great groups performing together.”

TV shows and in the Obie Award-winning musical “The Gospel at Colonus.” He especially enjoyed performing on the David Letterman and Conan O’Brien shows and looks forward to another scheduled appearance on Letterman’s show Jan. 31 singing excerpts from the group’s latest recording, “Duets.”

Ben Jaffe, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band creative director and tuba player, carries on the tradition established in 1961 by his father and mother, Allan and Sandra Jaffe, to preserve the music of New Orleans. Live music

AROUND TOWN

James Brazen Quartet: The jazz, soul, Latin and pop group performs. [6 p.m. Kennedy Center, 2700 F St. NW]

“Dresden”: Director Roland Suso Richter’s film about a German nurse and a British bomber pilot in 1945 is screened. [6:30 p.m. Goethe-Institut, 812 Seventh St. NW]

Conservatory Tour: A guided lunchtime tour of banana, coffee and vanilla plants. [Noon. U.S. Botanic Garden, 100 Maryland Ave. SW]

Lands of Enchantment: An exhibit of Australian Aboriginal paintings. [National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1250 New York Ave. NW]

Artful Animals: A family-friendly exhibit of artworks of African animals. [National Museum of African Art, 950 Independence Ave. SW]

Texture of Night: An exhibit of James McNeill Whistler’s moonlit landscapes. [Freer Gallery of Art, 1200 Jefferson Drive SW]

Darwin’s Legacy: An exhibition on Charles Darwin’s influence. [Museum of Natural History, 10th Street and Constitution Avenue NE]

Inside Tim Russert’s Office: An exhibition re-creates the office of one of the country’s most respected journalists. [9 a.m. Newseum, 555 Pennsylvania Ave. NW]

Victory lap: Gregg Allman rocks on at Rams Head

By Nancy Dunham
Special to The Examiner

Just because you missed the golden days of The Allman Brothers Band doesn’t mean you can’t get into the next best thing.

Gregg Allman, who formed the band in 1969 with his late brother Duane, is still going strong despite well-publicized bouts with hepatitis C and other maladies.

“I want to get in as much playing as I can,” said Allman, 62. “Now I have to give myself so much time to rest up [between shows]. You don’t want to go out and do a show on automatic pilot. I want to give it all I can.”

Indeed, the man who is credited with creating Southern rock/blues rock may have slowed physically, but he still has the enthusiasm, musical chops and whisky-heavy drawl of his youth.

This time out, listen for Allman to have a mix of new songs he’s recently written with some of the classics,



Gregg Allman may have been slowed physically from his bouts with hepatitis C, but that hasn’t affected his enthusiasm or musical chops. He will be performing Allman Brothers Band standards in Annapolis on Wednesday.

COURTESY PHOTO

IF YOU GO

Gregg Allman

» Where: Rams Head On Stage, 33 West St., Annapolis

» When: 8 p.m. Wednesday

» Info: \$125; ticketmaster.com

including several almost sure bets such as “Midnight Rider.”

“I can’t play everything, but we mix it up,” he said. “Things slow down when you get older.”

Not that Allman has slowed that much by contemporary standards. True, he can’t play the 300-plus shows each year that once filled his datebook, but he still puts on high-energy shows that exceed two hours.

Fan reviews — including those who attended last year’s Allman Brothers Band show at Merriweather Post Pavilion in Columbia — report Allman’s sound is as clear and magical as ever.

“Anyone wondering if Gregg was up to touring had all their fears put to rest as his voice sounded good and

every note out of his keyboarding was loud and crystal clear,” Roland Ray wrote on the band’s site.

That’s no one-time fluke, as evidenced by the bounty of accolades heaped on the man and his band by numerous critics including David Singer of the Schenectady (N.Y.) Gazette: “Gregg Allman sounded strong and healthy through classics like ‘Midnight Rider,’ ‘Hoochie Coochie Man’ and the coolest ‘Come and Go.’ They’re as good as they ever were, which, at one time, was as good as it gets.”